

CLAIMS:

1. A method of providing executable software from a software server to a plurality of broadcast receivers via a broadcast communication system; the method including:
 - maintaining in each broadcast receiver a configuration information identifying executable software components installed in the broadcast receiver;
 - 5 broadcasting from the software server to the broadcast receivers:
 - a software package description indicating software components that must have been installed in a broadcast receiver before accepting a software package associated with the software package description; and
 - the associated software package including at least one executable
 - 10 software component;
 - in each broadcast receiver:
 - determining whether the software package can be installed by comparing the software package description with the receiver's configuration information;
 - and
 - 15 upon a positive determination: installing the software package and updating the receiver's configuration information accordingly.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the configuration information includes for each installed software component a respective unique component identification, and the software package description includes the unique component identification of each
20 software component that must have been installed in a broadcast receiver before accepting the software package; and wherein the step of comparing the package description with the receiver's configuration information includes checking whether all component identification(s) in the software package description are part of the configuration information.
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3. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the software package includes at least one update of a software component; the software package description including the unique component identification of the software component.

4. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the software package includes a software component that requires a differing further software component to have been installed in the broadcast receiver; the software package description including the unique component identification of the further software component.

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5. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the configuration information includes for each installed software component a respective component version identification associated with the unique component identification; and wherein the software package description includes for each software component that must have been installed in a broadcast receiver before accepting the software package an associated component version identification; and wherein the step of comparing the package description with the receiver's configuration information includes checking for whether component identification(s) and associated component version identification(s) in the package description are also part of the configuration information.

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6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the component version identification in the software package description includes at least one of the following:

- an identification of one version;
- an identification of a minimum or maximum version, where versions are sequentially arranged;
- an indication of a sequential range of versions.

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7. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the software package description includes a plurality of acceptable software configurations where each software configuration indicates software components that must have been installed in a broadcast receiver before accepting the software package; and wherein the step of determining whether at least one software component of the software package can be installed includes verifying if at least one of the acceptable software configurations corresponds to the receiver's configuration information.

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8. A method as claimed in claim 1, including broadcasting a complete software image of a broadcast receiver from the software server to the broadcast receivers.

9. A method as claimed in claim 1, including the step of the broadcast receiver, in response to determining that at least one required software component is not installed, downloading the not installed software component(s) from the server; installing the downloaded software component(s) and updating the receiver's configuration information accordingly.
10. A broadcast receiver including:
a communication interface for receiving data from a broadcast communication system;
a storage for storing software components executable by a processor and for storing configuration information identifying the executable software components;
a processor for executing the stored software components; at least one of the software component being operative to cause the processor to:
receive through the communication interface:
a software package description indicating software components that must have been installed in the broadcast receiver before accepting a software package associated with the software package description; and
the associated software package including at least one executable software component;
determine whether the software package can be installed by comparing the software package description with the configuration information stored in the storage of the receiver; and
upon a positive determination: store the at least one software component of the software package in the storage and update the receiver's configuration information accordingly.